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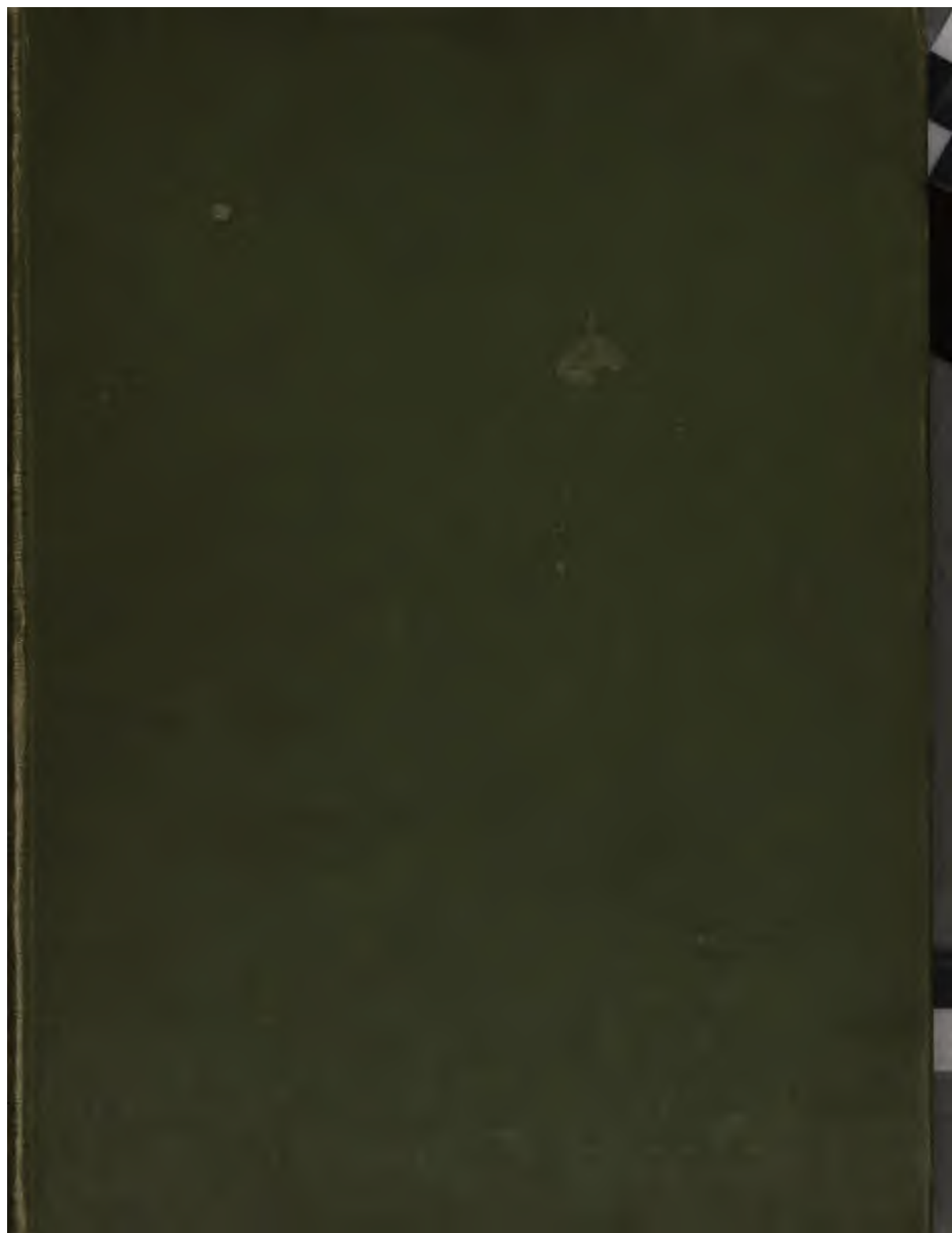
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Gift from
Mother.



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THE BARD OF THE DIMBOVITZA.



Vacarescu, Elena

THE BARD OF THE
DIMBOVITZA ~~So~~ ~~So~~
ROVMANIAN FOLK-SONGS
COLLECTED FROM THE PEASANTS
BY
HÉLÈNE VACARESCO
TRANSLATED BY
CARMEN SYLVA
AND
ALMA STRETTELL

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INTRODUCTION.

THE strange and beautiful songs, of which the following are a selection, seem to me a real treasure-trove, a valuable addition to the literature of the world. They are peculiar to a certain district of Roumania, and that a district in which the mysterious grandeur of mountains has combined with the melancholy and subtle beauty of vast plains, in influencing its people. The young poetess to whom we owe the discovery of these songs spent four years in collecting them among the peasants on her father's estates; and even though her family had for centuries been known and honoured by this race, yet she encountered many difficulties in trying to induce the peasants to repeat their songs for her. She was forced to affect a desire to learn spinning, that she might join the girls at their spinning-parties, and so overhear their songs more easily; she hid in the tall maize to hear the reapers crooning them; she caught them from the lips of peasant-women, of luteplayers ("Cobzars," so called from the name of their instrument, a "cobza" or lute), of gipsies and fortune-tellers; she listened for them by death-beds, by cradles, at the dance and in the tavern, with inexhaustible patience. They are worthy to rank with the best national songs that India, Arabia, and the

far North have given us; and are truly noble in their childlike purity, and simple treatment of, and sympathy with, every phase of natural human experience. They are mostly unrhymed—the gipsies using rhymes occasionally—and they depend more for rhythm on the long, musical cadence of each phrase, than on any definite poetical form; they are sung to a monotonous chant, and not accompanied by any instrument, except in the case of the Cobzar, who sings to his lute. Most of them are improvisations. They usually begin and end with a refrain, which seems to have been suggested to the singer by something in his surroundings, and to have struck him as fitting in with the mood of the song, although it has not always any immediate connection with it. For the spinning-songs, the girls all stand in a circle, spinning; the best spinner and singer being in the middle. She begins to improvise a song, and at any moment she chooses, throws her spindle, holding it by a long thread, to another girl, who has to go on spinning while the first girl pulls out the flax—a proceeding requiring great dexterity—and at the same time, has to continue the improvisation which has been begun.

The “Drama” at the end of the present volume was found in a very ancient MS. hidden in the vaults under the ancestral home of the Vacaresco family. In these vaults the people used of old to take refuge during the Turkish raids.

CARMEN SYLVA.

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LUTEPLAYER'S SONGS.

LUTEPLAYER'S SONGS.

THE YOUNG HEIDUCK.¹

*Yea, the night knows my song,—
And she has told it to the stars in heaven,
The little stars, to whom it seems so sweet,
That every evening they return, and listen
To hear my song from me.*

CANST thou perceive, when the green corn is springing,
How it comes forth from out the brown earth's breast?
Nay, but thou canst not see the green corn growing,
Yet doth it grow the while. And young Love groweth
In young hearts even so.

The Heiduck bore the kiss of his beloved
Upon his lips—and first the wind would steal it
To carry it with autumn leaves away;
And the wind spake: "Give me the kiss, O comrade,
And I will make thereof a little flower."
Then the night spake: "Give me the kiss, O comrade,

¹ Note 1.

And I will make thereof a little star."
"Nay!" he replied, "the kiss of my beloved
Hath mingled with the currents of my blood;
Here on my lips it lies, and I will give it
To none, but keep it safe for ever more!"
O'er the whole earth the Heiduck roved and wandered;
And kept the kiss.

He roamed through villages, and saw at even
The fair young maidens dancing in the ring.
Bridges he saw, that watch the rivers flowing.
Through sun and moonlight still he kept his course,
Until he came upon a snow-white meadow,
White as though turtle-doves had rained their feathers
Thick on the sward.

And on that meadow the white woman met him,
Took from his lips the kiss of his beloved,
And thrust it in her girdle, like a flower.
Then down upon the earth the Heiduck laid him,
Since the white woman on the snow-white meadow
Took from his lips the kiss of his beloved.

*Yea, the night knows my song—
And she has told it to the stars in heaven,
The little stars, to whom it seems so sweet,
That every evening they return, and listen
To hear my song from me.*

THE LUTEPLAYER'S HOUSE.

*I took the beads of her necklace all,
To thread them for her, but they did fall
From my trembling hand, and a hundred ways
They rolled through the young green maize.*

COME to the luteplayer's house, come in,
'Tis always open, the birds therein
Build nests, as though the wood it were ;
And all day long the sun dwells there
As if it were the sky—though still
He shines in heaven with right good-will
For all to see,
Yet in the luteplayer's cottage, he
Is of the household, verily.

There stands by the door a well of stone,
Wherein the water comes up alone.

When to the luteplayer's cottage there
The moon goes in, a maiden fair
She doth become, and full of grace,
With smiling face.

Luteplayer's Songs.

When at the luteplayer's cottage-gate
Grief enters, she becometh straight
The loveliest woman ever seen,
Gentle, yet ah ! so sad of mien.

There in his house on the ground sits he,
Nor will he rise, if thou shouldst come,
But through the window show to thee
His sky's blue dome.
If thou art thirsty, he will ne'er
Give thee a drink, but show thee where
His well doth stand.
And if thou weep, with kindly hand
He will not wipe thy tears away,
But he will sing thee many a lay,
The live-long day.

The little storks, they love it well,
The luteplayer's house the swallows know,
And while yet far away, they tell
Each other, they will thither go,
Because there's singing there.
And sometimes, too, a woman fair
Leans from a window down, and she
Doth watch the luteplayer's house and see
How he sits singing there.

The Luteplayer's House.

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And in the luteplayer's house, beside,
Are flowers and daggers, only those
 He never shows ;
But empty all the house would seem,
Save for the blessed sunshine's gleam,
And songs that there abide.
Windows there are on every side,
That one may see the heavens wide,
And grass, and grass so green.
Yea, at the luteplayer's cottage there,
Grass grows indoors, I could declare ;
 So much of it is seen !

*I took the beads of her necklace all,
To thread them for her, but they did fall
From my trembling hand, and a hundred ways
They rolled through the green young maize.*

DEATH FOR LOVE.

*Take the flower from my breast, I pray thee,
Take the flower, too, from out my tresses ;
And then go hence, for see, the night is fair ;
The stars rejoice to watch thee on thy way.*

A WHILE ago, there came a man at even
Into the village, and the people asked him :

“What seekest thou ?”

Yet would the man not tell them what he sought,
But went and took his stand before each hut
That bore upon its wall a painted flower.¹

At ev'ry one such hut he halted, asking :

“O little hut, wherein a maiden slumbers,
Where is the maiden that will die of love ?”

But all the huts were silent.

Then at the smallest hut and last, he halted ;

There on the threshold lay a broken spindle,

By the old well lay broken, too, a pitcher.

When at this house he asked

Whether it held the maiden whom he sought,

The maiden threw her window wide, and answered :

“Yea, I will die of love.”

¹ Note 2.

Death for Love.

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Then the man blessed her, and he kissed her lips.
And lo ! when morning broke, the maid was dead.

*Take the flower from my breast, I pray thee,
Take the flower, too, from out my tresses,
And then go hence ; for see, the night is fair ;
The stars rejoice to watch thee on thy way.*

SONG OF THE FIRE.

I CONSUMED the deep, green forest,
With all its songs ;
And now the songs of the forest,
All sing aloud in me.

I watched the maiden spinning ;
I love a maiden's distaff,
I love her spindle,
That ceaseless flieth, still to be caught back,
For ever flying, and yet never free.
Then said I: Maiden, why dost watch me so,
And not thy dancing spindle ?
Why dost thou hearken only to my songs,
And never sing thine own ?
Out there, the day has wedded with the night;
And the moon slyly smiled to see that wedding,
Whereat the birds grew dumb.
The maiden looks at me,
Instead of looking out, and wondering
At the great wedding of the day and night.
Child, child, now hear my song !
I dearly love dear love !

Song of the Fire.

I I

And thou, too, lovest love ;
Wouldst sing thyself, and never hear my songs
But that thou lovest love.
The deep green forest, that I did consume,
He told me that a lovely thing was love,
There in the deep green forest.
Yet he said likewise, for he is not jealous,
That on the river banks,
And beneath cottage roofs,
Most lovely, too, is love,
And that in maidens' hearts it makes its dwelling,
Wherein it is much warmer, warmer far,
Than thou art, here by me,
Or than mine own soul, that is warmth itself !
The forest thinks, too, that the laughing spring,
 Who is his all-in-all,
Is nobody and naught compared with love ;
And that he were to blame for growing green
In spring, except love asked him to grow green.
The forest thinks that tears would die away,
If all had love, as ev'ry nest hath eggs,
And ev'ry head of maize its feathery cap.

All this the forest told me,
And bade me tell it thee ;
The forest I consumed, and who the while,
Struggling in death-throes, sang the praise of love.

Luteplayer's Songs.

Maiden, that sendest flying
And callest back thy spindle,
I have consumed the forest,
 With all its songs,
And all the songs of the forest
 Now sing aloud in me.

HOPELESS.

(GIPSY SONG.)

*Into the mist I gazed, and fear came on me.
Then said the mist: "I weep for the lost sun."*

WE sat beneath our tent ;
Then he that hath no hope drew near us there,
And sat him down by us.
We asked him : "Hast thou seen the plains, the mountains ?"
And he made answer : "I have seen them all."
And then his cloak he showed us, and his shirt,
Torn was the shirt, there, close above the heart,
Pierced was the breast, there, close above the heart—
The heart was gone.
And yet he trembled not, the while we looked,
And sought the heart, the heart that was not there.
He let us look. And he that had no hope
Smiled, that we grew so pale, and sang us songs.
Then we did envy him, that he could sing,
Without a heart to suffer what he sang.
And when he went, he cast his cloak about him,
And those that met him, they could never guess
How that his shirt was torn above the heart,

And that his breast was pierced above the heart,
And that the heart was gone.

*I gazed into the mist, and fear came on me.
Then said the mist : " I weep for the lost sun."*

GIPSY SONG.

THERE where the path to the plain goes by,
Where deep in the thicket my hut doth lie,
Where corn stands green in the garden-plot—
The brook ripples by so clearly there,
The way is so open, so white and fair—
My heart's best belovèd, he takes it not.

There where I sit by my door and spin,
While morning winds that blow out and in
With scent of roses enfold the spot,
Where at evening I softly sing my lay,
That the wand'rer hears as he goes his way—
My heart's best belovèd, he hears it not.

There, where on Sundays I go alone,
To the old, old well with the milk-white stone,
Where by the fence, in a nook forgot,
Rises a spring in the daisied grass,
That makes whoso drinks of it love—alas !
My heart's best belovèd, he drinks it not.

There, by my window, where day by day,
When the sunbeams first brighten the morning's grey,
I lean and dream of my weary lot,
And wait his coming, and softly cry
Because of love's longing, that makes one die—
My heart's best beloved, he dieth not.

SONG OF THE SHROUD

(WHILE SPINNING IT).

THOU snow-white apple-blossom,
Unto the ground art fallen,
Down to the earth art fallen,
Thou snow-white apple-blossom.

Snow-white as thou art, so shall be my shroud ;
Yea, white as apple-blossoms,

White as a bridal wreath.

Thou wilt be soft for me, my gentle shroud,
Say, wilt thou not ? nor chafe my limbs, when I
Have fallen asleep, and know of nothing more ;
Whilst in the village houses, round about,
They light the fire without me, and draw near
To tell their tales and spin ?

But whilst I sit and spin thee, winding-sheet,
Shall I not tell thee, too, some fairy-tale ?

Thou snow-white apple-blossom,
Down to the earth art fallen,
Unto the ground art fallen,
Thou snow-white apple-blossom.

Dear winding-sheet of mine,
Well shalt thou cover me
 When cold my heart shall be !
But now upon my heart, while yet 'tis warm,
 I clasp thee tenderly ;
And since thou art to sleep
There in my grave with me,
Then look thy fill once more at this fair earth
That in the grave thou mayst remember her,
And down in that deep grave mayst gladden me,
 With telling of the earth.
But when thou speakest to me in my grave,
 O shroud, O little shroud,
Tell me not of my home,
Nor of my casement, swinging in the wind,
Nor of the moon, that loves
 To steal in through that casement ;
Nor of the brook, where silver moonbeams bathe,
And where I used to drink.
Tell me not of my mother—tell me not
Of him, the bridegroom chosen out for me.
For then I should be sorry that I slept
Low in the grave with thee, my winding-sheet.
Yet speak to me
As though thou knewest naught of all these things—
Somewhat on this wise :
How that the world is not worth longing for,
For it is always winter there ;

How that the moon for sweetheart hath the cloud,
And that my mother mourned me scarce an hour,
And that my bridegroom came not
To lay his fur-cap down upon my grave
That so the soul might think it was her nest.

Speak thus, my shroud,
And soundly will I sleep and heavily
Deep in my grave with thee,
And love thee as the wand'rer loves the well.
Wouldst have me love thee so, speak thus to me.

Thou snow-white apple-blossom,
Unto the ground art fallen,
Down to the earth art fallen,
Thou snow-white apple-blossom.

THE COMFORTERS.

*He who sleeps by the fire doth dream,
Doth dream that his heart is warm,
But when he awakes, his heart
Is afraid for the bitter cold.
Didst thou mark how the swallows flew, how they flew away
from hence ?*

My father is dead—and his cap is mine,
His cap of fur and his leathern belt—
 Mine, too, his knives.
When I fall asleep, when I slumb'ring lie,
Then the knives spring forth, from their sheaths they fly,
 And roam the fields.
I know not whither the knives have strayed—
But when morning dawns, at my window-pane
I hear a tapping—I fling it wide,
And there are my knives come home again.
“Where have ye been ?” I ask them then,
And they make reply: “In the hearts of men !
There was one so sick for love, and torn—
 We healed its wound ;
And another was weary and travel-worn—
 We gave it rest.

For dear to us are the hearts of men,
And dear their blood ;
We drink it as furrows drink the rain,
Then, tapping, come to thy window-pane :
Make way for thy knives—they have done their work.
Now wipe the blood with thy sleeve away—
Thy sleeve with the dusk-red broidered flowers—
And wash the sleeve in the river clean,
Then thrust us once more our sheaths between,
The sheaths on the leathern belt.”

*He who sits by the fire doth dream,
Doth dream that his heart is warm,
And when he awakes, his heart
Is afraid for the bitter cold.
Didst thou mark how the swallows flew, so swiftly away
from hence ?*

AT A GRAVE.

*Look not upon the sky at eventide,
For that makes sorrowful the heart of man ;
Look rather here into my heart, and joyful
Shalt thou then always be.*

To yonder grave there oftentimes came a woman,
And said to it : " Hast thou forgiven me ? "
" Avaunt ! " the grave made answer.
Then weeping she would go her way, but going
She ever plucked a flower from the sward.
Yet still the grave would grant her no forgiveness.
Then said the woman : " Take at least my tears."
" Avaunt ! " the grave made answer.
But as she, weeping, turned away and went,
Behold, the grave-stone would uplift itself,
And the dead man gaze forth,
Sending a long look after her, that woman
Who weeping went her way.

*Look not upon the sky at eventide,
For that makes sorrowful the heart of man ;
Look rather here into my heart, and joyful
Shalt thou then always be.*

"I AM CONTENT."

*A spindle of hazel-wood had I ;
Into the mill-stream it fell one day—
The water has brought it me back no more.*

As he lay a-dying, the soldier spake :

" I am content !

Let my mother be told, in the village there,
And my bride in the hut be told,
That they must pray with folded hands,
With folded hands for me."

The soldier is dead—and with folded hands
His bride and his mother pray.

On the field of battle they dug his grave,
And red with his life-blood the earth was dyed,
The earth they laid him in.

The sun looked down on him there and spake :
" I am content."

And flowers bloomed thickly upon his grave,
And were glad they blossomed there.

And when the wind in the tree-tops roared,
The soldier asked from the deep, dark grave :

" Did the banner flutter then ? "

" Not so, my hero," the wind replied.

"The fight is done, but the banner won,
Thy comrades of old have borne it hence,
Have borne it in triumph hence."
Then the soldier spake from the deep, dark grave:

"I am content."

And again, he heard the shepherds pass
And the flocks go wand'ring by,
And the soldier asked: "Is the sound I hear,
The sound of the battle's roar?"

And they all replied: "My hero, nay!
Thou art dead, and the fight is o'er,
Our country joyful and free."
Then the soldier spake from the deep, dark grave:

"I am content."

Then he heareth the lovers laughing pass,
And the soldier asks once more:
"Are these not the voices of them that love,
That love—and remember me?"

"Not so, my hero," the lovers say,
"We are those that remember not;
For the spring has come and the earth has smiled,
And the dead must be forgot."

Then the soldier spake from the deep, dark grave:
"I am content."

*A spindle of hazel-wood had I;
Into the mill-stream it fell one day—
The water has brought it me back no more.*

THE HEIDUCK'S SONG.

*I tell the forest the wonders I see in my dreams,
And the forest loves to hear the tale of my dreaming,
More than the song of birds,
More than the murmur of leaves.*

THE huts had wellnigh beguiled me to stay, for the
windows

Stood wide, and the smiles of the maidens shone out from
within,

But the Heiduck am I—and I love the far-stretching
roads,

And the plains, and my galloping steed !

My mother gave birth to me, sure, on a sunshiny morning,
And had I but never known love, ah, how happy were I !
I sing at the hour when the moon climbs above the
horizon ;

The tales that the agèd folk know, I can tell, every one,
And I make the young dance, when I sing, to the tune of
my ballads.

For I a strange woman have loved ;

She comes every night to me now and she kisses my fore-
head,

And asks if I love her still.

THE WAY TO HAPPINESS.

*If thou shouldst come at evening, when the moon doth rise,
Thou wouldst see that the moon is very red, when she rises ;
But thou lovest those evenings better, when she is very pale,
Like a dead woman,
And when she looks upon the earth with sadness
As though it were the sadness of the Earth
That made her pale.*

THOU dost sit down upon my threshold ;
And since the threshold is very narrow,
I sit me down upon the grass by the threshold,
And our spindles fly together ;
And we do not know which of the two flies faster,
Thine or mine.
We watch the road,
Even as though something expected were coming down
the road.
And we see a little horse pass by, that has broken loose.
Little horse, where goest thou ?
If thou dost seek the plain, take the path that leadeth
downward,
And thou wilt find the plain.
If thou dost seek the well,

Pass beneath the poplars there, where the ravens build
their nests,

And thou wilt find the well,

But if thou seekest happiness, go over all the earth,

With the pallor of the moon,

And thou shalt not find it.

And in watching the little horse that ran so fast

Beneath the pallor of the moon,

I felt that the little horse was carrying me away.

How glad we were !

The villages were sleeping ;

The hearts of weary men were sleeping too,

And their sleep wondered, thus to hear us pass.

The birds were sleeping, and their dreams

Wondered to hear us pass.

And we passed o'er all the earth, till the morning came, in
pity,

To tell the moon to hide her sadness,

That saddened the sadness of the earth.

And I found myself upon my threshold once more,

And there our fallen spindles were asking each other

Which of the two went faster, thine or mine.

And I did not tell the spindles

That the little horse had gone much faster than
they,

And that he had not taken the path that goes down to the
plain,

To find the plain ;

Nor passed beneath the poplars where the ravens build
their nests,

To find the well.

And the little horse will yet go on, over all the earth,
But I shall stay in the grass beside my threshold,
And watch him pass.

*If thou shouldst come at evening, when the moon doth rise,
Thou wouldst see that the moon is very red when she rises ;
But thou lovest those evenings better, when she is very pale,
Like a dead woman,
And when she looks upon the Earth with sadness,
As though Earth's sadness made her pale.*

THE DEAD WIFE'S KISS.

*The flowers fear the hoar-frost ;
And, save the stars, none see
The flowers die by night.*

A MAN passed down the road—how sad was he !
My sister of the cross,¹ who is yon man,
Who goes so sorrowfully on his way ?——

The other night, there rose up a dead woman
Out of her grave, because the night was fair.
She was so glad to see the earth again,
That she kissed all she found upon her way.
She kissed the flowers growing by the grave—
Beneath her kiss the flowers all drooped and faded.
She kissed the time-worn brink of the old well,
And the well felt as though a stone were sikning
Down to its depths, at the dead woman's kiss.
Then the dead woman met yon man, who wandered
Abroad that night, because the night was fair ;
And him the dead kissed also, on the lips.

When o'er the new-mown hay the light wind passeth,

¹ Note 3.

Each little blade doth sorrow that it stands not
To take the wind's soft breath.
Down in the river-bed a stone is lying ;
The river has flowed over it so long,
That now the stone has learnt them all by heart,
 The river's many songs.
When the grass stands full high,
It reaches up to all the maidens' girdles.

And the dead kissed yon man upon the lips,
And he can eat no more, can drink no more,
Since the dead woman's kiss.
Sleep lays her kiss no more upon his brow
Since the dead woman's kiss.
And if he slept, no one would dare to watch him
Since the dead woman's kiss.
And yet he never saith : " O thou dead woman,
Why hast thou laid thy kiss upon my lips,
That I can eat no more, and drink no more,
 Since that thy kiss ? "
But he saith : " Let the grass with softest murmurs
Grow o'er thy grave, as though birds sang therein.
And may'st thou in thy grave long keep remembrance
Of earth, and of thy house, and of the weeping
 Of those that wept for thee ;
 Yea, of the mourning
 Of those that mourned for thee.
Thy dust be fruitful as my mother's womb,

The Dead Wife's Kiss.

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And let the earth rejoice to have thy dust."

And yonder man

Bears the dead woman's kiss upon his lips,

And he can eat no more, nor drink, since then.

The flowers fear the hoar-frost.

None save the stars see the flowers die by night.

THE SOLDIER'S TENT.

*Across the mountains the mist hath drawn
A cov'ring of bridal white ;
The plains afar make lament, and mourn
That the flutt'ring veil of the mist-wreaths born
Hath hidden the mountains from sight.*

THE soldier lay smiling peacefully
Asleep in his tent on the sward,
The moon crept in and said : " Look at me,
A glance from thy sweetheart am I, for thee !"
But he answered : " I have my sword."

Then the rustling wind drew softly near,
Played round him with whispers light :
" I am the sighs of thy mother dear,
The sighs of thy mother am I, dost hear ?"
But he answered : " I have the fight."

Then night sank down from the dark'ning sky
Round the sleeper, and murmured : " Rest,
Thy sweetheart's veil o'er thy face doth lie !"
But he answered : " No need of it have I,
For the banner doth cover me best."

By his tent the river, clear and wide,
Rolled onward its silver flood,
And said : " I am water, the cleansing tide
More blessèd than aught in the world beside."
But he answered : " I have my blood."

Then Sleep drew near to his tent, and low
She whispered with soothing breath :
" I am Sleep, the healer of ev'ry woe,
The dearest treasure of man below."
But the soldier replied : " I have Death."

*Across the mountains the mist hath drawn
A cowl'ring of bridal white ;
The plains afar make lament, and mourn
That the flutt'ring veil of the mist-wreaths born
Hath hidden the mountains from sight.*

SONG OF THE BLOOD.

The blood, the blood that flows through the veins of men,

As the rivers through meadows flow,

The blood was jealous of all the birds' sweet songs,

And said: "How I shall sing!"

The blood was jealous of all the wild wind's songs,

And said: "How I shall sing!"

THE MAIDEN'S BLOOD.

UPON an evening in the month of May,
When from the heavens like a burning tear
 The sun dropped down,
Then did the blood awaken in the veins
Of the young maiden wand'ring through the fields.
Then the blood cried to her,
And the blood burned in her,
And as it burned within her, thus it spake :
"What art thou making, maiden, of thy youth ?
 What wilt thou make of me ?
I tire of this light tripping to and fro,
This idle running through thy strong young frame.
Now would I fain stand still and do my work ;
And mark, when thou shalt see
This work of thine own flesh, thy blood renewed,
Then shalt thou thank the blood that gave thee this."
So the blood burned within her,
And thus it cried to her.
And there, beside the maize-field,
The other one was waiting,
He—the mysterious one.

In the month of May, at even,
The sun drops down from heaven
 Heavily, like a tear.

THE SOLDIER'S BLOOD.

*The blood that is spilt on the ground turns black,
The blood turns black that is spilt ;
But the blood is red in the hero's veins,
As red as a ripe red berry,
As red as the lips of a maiden,
As red as her Sunday girdle.*

ON the eve of the battle the hero sleeps,
But his blood sleeps not, that he soon shall shed
As the storm-clouds shed the rain.
Red is the blood in the hero's breast,
And he hears it speak in his sleep ;
And the blood speaks thus :

“ I shall out to-morrow
Like wine from the cask,
And bright will I paint him,
With burning crimson,
The noble boy.
Ha ! what joy to come forth
To the glorious daylight,
I, captive so long !
Shall I paint him a wreath,
A gay red wreath,

On his radiant brow ?
Nay, for his fur-cap
Lies close on his brow ;
No stain will I cast
On the cap of the hero.
Nor from his shoulder
Will I spring forth,
When the enemy's bullet shall call,
For the hero's shoulder
Beareth his weapon,
And thus hath it honour enough !
Nay, there will I forth,
Where thy young heart is beating,
My hero, thy bold brave heart.
With me shall thy life
Ebb as gently away
As a flower that floats on the stream ;
Yea, all thy desires shall fade,
But the name of the hero shall fade not,
And thy heart shall be garlanded round
With a garland of blood.
When thy mother beside thee stands
Weeping, with folded hands,
The stain on thy heart,
The blood-red stain,
Shall be softer than all her prayers.
And when thy bride
Warms thee with tears,

Luteplayer's Songs.

The stain on thy heart,
The blood-red stain,
Shall be warmer than all her tears.
And when the flowers
Bloom on thy grave,
The stain on thy heart,
The small, red stain,
Shall be fairer than all the flowers.
When the old folk tell
Of the young who fell,
Then the stain on thy heart
Shall think of thee,
More proudly than all their songs.

*The blood that is spilt on the ground turns black,
The blood turns black that is spilt.
But the blood in the hero's veins is red,
Red as a ripe red berry,
Red as the lips of a maiden,
Red as her Sunday girdle.*

THE OLD MAN'S BLOOD.

*Ah me! how sober I am and old!
Ah me! how poor and how icy cold!
Cold as the mountain 'neath snow-drifts hoar,
Cold as the sword that is drawn no more.*

Ah me ! how sober I have grown and sad,
And naught can give me rosy youth again ;
 Neither the songs of the young,
 Nay, nor the foam of the wine.
For I have now past over
Into the veins of the young,
 Nor can I die
As long as there are men begot of me.
Yet cold I am and wearily I flow,
 Even as a weary river,
 Flowing through wide, flat plains.
Wilt thou not warm me, spade, with thy hard toil ?
 Nay, but thou canst not warm me.
Wilt thou not warm me, steed, with thy wild galop ?
 Nay, but thou canst not warm me.
And even were I called forth through a wound,
 I should but thinly trickle,
 Poor coward, that I have grown !
For many generations took of me,
And I am born anew in them once more,
 The while I die.
But ah ! how cold I am !
 Warm thou me, Sun !
Then the Sun answers : " But when thou wert young,
Didst need me not to warm thee."
And he is right, the Sun !
Yet ah ! how cold am I !
Cold as a widow's heart,

As the last penny in a spendthrift's purse.
The trees feel no compassion for me,
They have their fresh young sap ;
The maidens feel no pity for me,
They have their chains of silver.
How gladly were the old man's blood
To its last drop drained dry !

*Ah me ! how sober I am and old !
Ah me ! how poor and how icy cold !
Cold as the mountain 'neath snow-drifts hoar,
Cold as the sword that is drawn no more !*

TWO SOULS.

*Now get thee down to the plain, and there
Thou shalt see the plum-trees blossoming,
And the plum-trees all, so white and fair,
Will tell thee how they love the spring.*

My love went hence at break of day,
And at eventide she returned no more ;
I asked each path and road I saw :
“ Which is the way she went, which way ? ”
And a little child in her arms she bore !

I asked the people : “ Have ye seen
A woman, in whose arms doth lie
A little child ? ” But they hurried by,
Too busy to answer me, I ween ;—
And the people gave me no reply.

By the river I sat me down and said :
“ What sings in thee, that dost onward roll ? ”
And the river answered : “ The baby’s soul.”
I passed yon poplars, and overhead
Sang in their branches the mother’s soul.

Said the mother's soul to the baby's soul :
" Two together on earth were we."
And both the souls had forgotten me.

*Now get thee down to the plain, and there
Thou shalt see the plum-trees blossoming,
And the plum-trees all, so white and fair,
Will tell thee how they love the spring.*

THE WELL OF TEARS.

*The night is coming, let thy spindle be.
Those who went by this way
Spoke of their huts together, and the huts
Seemed far, so far away.*

WHAT saw'st thou at the bottom of the well?—

I saw my face, my bodice, and my chain.—

Child, didst thou see naught else?—

I saw there at the bottom of the well

A man who wept.

My face, down there, was sore afraid of him ;

And all the water in the well was naught

But this man's tears.

I was afraid, and would not draw those tears.

Then came a woman, and I went aside,

But yet I saw, how she drew up those tears,

And how she drank them, looking all the while

Up at the sky.

Then with her apron she did wipe her lips,

And went from thence—and I, too, went my way.

*The night is coming, let thy spindle be.
Those who went by this way
Spoke of their huts together, and the huts
Seemed far, too far away.*

SONG OF THE DAGGER.

THE dagger at my belt it dances
 Whene'er I dance ;
But when I drink the foaming wine-cup,
 Then it grows sad ;
For it is thirsty too, the dagger,
 It thirsts for blood !

"Give, give me drink," it saith, "O Master,
For if I wear no stain of crimson,
The sunshine is ashamed to glitter
 Upon my blade.
Then give, that I too may be drunken
With the warm blood that flows from wounds.
The maids will find thy kisses sweeter
When thou hast quenched my thirst,
And I shall dance, when thou art dancing,
 More gaily at thy belt."

Did I but heed my dagger, now at night-time,
 I should go find thee, love.
Beneath thy shift I should seek out so deftly
 The spot where beats thy heart,
And pour thy blood's red warmth out for my dagger,

Song of the Dagger.

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Because thy kiss, O love, thou hast denied me,
And because I for that thy kiss have thirsted,
Even as the dagger thirsteth for thy blood.

Then will the sunshine sparkle and be merry,
 Seeing thy red young blood,
Yea, and the merry sunbeams, they shall dry it,
 Together with my tears.
My tears and thy blood shall flow together,
 Mingling like rivers twain ;
And though thy blood be hot, yet can it never
 Be burning as my tears.
Nay, but thy blood will wonder when it feeleth
 How burning are my tears.

The dagger at my belt, it dances
 Whene'er I dance ;
But when I drink the foaming wine-cup,
 Then it grows sad ;
For it is thirsty too, the dagger,
 It thirsts for blood !

FALLEN.

*Plant no more flowers, I tell thee, beside the cottage-wall,
Its shadow makes them wither—and flowers love the sun.*

FOUR weeks it is, O sister, that not a single raindrop
Has fallen on our meadows,¹ and for four weeks I weep.
Yes, I—who with my laughter could make those laugh
that wept.

I hate my girdle's pearl-drops, the ducats of my necklace,
And as the Heiduck's mantle, my bodice weighs me down.
For sin has crossed my threshold, and shut the door
behind it,

And I am left a prisoner, here with my sin alone.
The blessed air of heaven can find me out no longer,
Since sin has shut the door.
And they, whom once I cherished, all tell me now: "We
leave thee
Here with thy sin alone."

When that is born that comes of sin, how dare I
Say to it: "Thou art born."

For, could it answer, it would surely answer:
"Far better had I died."

¹ Note 4.

Show me the churchyard road, that I may learn there
To trust the graves, and tell them of my sin ;
The graves alone will not upbraid me with it,
For they still say to Love :
"Love, be thou blessed for all the fruits thou bearest ;"
And never question, how those fruits are borne.

But all things living turn from me away.
The maidens spurn me : "We are pure," they say.
The stars are all ashamed to look at me ;
Our crops are long forsaken of the rain ;
He whom I love, upbraids me that I loved him,
And fearfully his glance avoideth mine ;
When at the sight of me the maidens redden,
He reddens too—my shame makes him ashamed.
The fountain gives me water as of yore,
But the cool draught refreshes me no more ;
And if I should draw nigh, they would reproach it
For letting this my face be mirrored there ;
The wand'rer is amazed
To see my spindle's weariness, and asks,
"Who is yon wife, whose spindle is so listless ?"
Then falt'ringly my sisters answer him :
"We know not whence her spindle's weariness."
Show me the churchyard road, that I may learn
To make the graves my friends,
Since from their homes and hearths men banish me,
Because my coming poisons all their joy,

Seeing I ever bring my curse with me.

The joy that once I tasted is like a dried-up river,
With naught but stones to fill it—the river is dried up.
For joy can cross my threshold no more, since sin hath
crossed it,
And shut the door so fast.

*Plant no more flowers, I pray thee, so close around the
cottage,
Its shadow makes them wither—and flowers love the sun.*

SONG.

Two birds flew into the sunset glow,
And one of them was my love, I know.
Ah, had it but flown to my heart, its nest !

Two maidens down to the harvest go,
And one of them is my own, I know.
Ah, had she but come to me here, it were best !

Two stars remembered the long ago—
And one of them was my heart's great woe.
If it had but forgotten, and paled in the west !

Two children died in the hut below,
And one, my heart, to the grave doth go.
Ah, had it but taken me with it to rest !

THE RIVER OF TEARS.

*I have full twenty ducats upon my Sunday necklace,
When I laugh, the birds all twitter : " How merrily she
laughs."*

The nearest path to the village leads down along the brook.

THINK thou no more of that which thou hast seen ;
For ever will thy brow be overcast
If thou dost think thereon.

The Heiduck hath two mantles ;
And his courser is so fleet ;
And all the maidens love him,
For his mantles and his courser,
And for his songs.

The Heiduck passed beside a grave at even,
And there he heard his dead love say to him :
" Give me thy mantle, for the grave is cold."
But he sped on and gave her not his mantle.
And then again he heard his dead love saying :
" Give me a kiss, for oh, the grave is cold."
But he sped on, and gave her not the kiss.
And then his dead love saith :
" Rein in thy courser fleet, for I am cold
Here in my grave."

But he sped on, and reined not in his courser.

Again his dead love saith :

“ Then sing thy songs to me, for I am cold,
Here in my grave.”

But he sped on, and sang her not his songs.

Then in her grave his dead love fell a-weeping—

Her tears did wet his mantle,

Her tears became a mighty flood, that checked

His fleet steed's gallop,

And all his songs were silenced by her tears.

I have full twenty ducats upon my Sunday necklace,

*When I laugh, the birds all twitter : “ How merrily she
laughs.”*

The nearest path to the village leads down along the brook.

LAUGHTER.

*The leaf is loth to fall, while yet the sky is blue,
And saith unto the wind :*

"Why hast thou made me fall, while yet the sky is blue ?"

SHE ever laughed, that woman ;
And whoso met that woman,
Her laughter made them weep.
They said : " Oh, laugh no more."
And all she met upon her way grew sad
And told her of its sorrow.
The trees around her said :
" Where are our leaves and birds ? "
The dried-up rivers mourned,
Lamenting for their streams.
Men showed her all their tears ;
The maidens loosed their girdles,
That she might see how sorrowful their heart was ;
And everything did tell her of its woe,
To stop that woman's laughter.
The graves unclosed, and showed their dust to her,
Their doors the houses opened
To let her see the empty hearths within ;
The childless women
Made plaint of their unfruitful wombs, accursed ;

The plains stretched out their barrenness before her,
And men their sum of crime ;
And one and all they said : " Behold our pain,"
To stop that woman's laughter,
Yet went she laughing through a world of sorrows.

*The leaf is loth to fall, while yet the sky is blue,
And saith unto the wind :
" Why hast thou made me fall, while yet the sky is blue ? "*

THE SOLDIER.

THE soldier was a-weary.
I spake: "Come, sit thee down ;"
I gave him water from my wooden pitcher,
And asked him: "Hast thou quenched thy thirst ?"
The soldier looked deep down into mine eyes,
And I, I saw his smile.

The maize was full of sunshine,
The sunshine made my distaff bright as gold ;
My necklace had red beads.

But yet, the soldier went away
When he had drunk the water from my pitcher,
Rested his weariness upon my threshold.
The threshold still doth say :
"His weariness he rested here on me,"
And still my heart remembereth his smile.
But shouldest thou again come down this road
That looks toward my house,
Then linger not
Since thou must soon pass on.
Go drink from out the river,
And rest thee in the forest ;

For if thou come back here again, my heart
Will have two sorrows.

I love the hero and his name is sweet
To call to mind, as chimes of Sunday bells.
When he goes by, the children gaze at him,
The sun looks down to see him, how he goes
On to his death.
For he will die in fullest light
Of glorious day ;
His soul will shout for joy, to leave the earth
In radiant day.—
I love the hero.
And sweet will be the maiden's love to thee,
Though all unknown—for like a star above,
So is the maiden, giving light to all,
Yet keeping all her fire within herself.
And thou shalt die, not knowing of this love,
Though thou hast drunk from out my wooden pitcher,
Rested thy weariness upon my threshold.
I love the hero !

The soldier was a-weary.
I said : “ Come, sit thee down ; ”
I gave him water from my wooden pitcher,
And asked him : “ Hast thou quenched thy thirst ? ”
The soldier looked deep down into mine eyes,
And I, I saw his smile.

THE BLACK HEART.

A HEART there was—poor heart—as black as night,
And naught in all the world could make it white.

Poor heart, it prayed the doves, as they flew by,
To droop their soft white wings o'er it, and try
If that might help—but it was all in vain,
For black as night the poor heart did remain.
And then it begged the moon, a long, long while
To gaze upon it with her silv'ry smile.
And long the moon gazed down, full many a night,
Yet still in vain—the poor heart grew not white.
The river with its waters washed it o'er,
E'en as it doth the pebbles on its shore,
And even as on tender corn, the rain
Fell fast upon it—yet was all in vain.
The sun looked pitying down, compassionate,
On the heart's blackness and its bitter fate.
At last a heart, a happy heart, came by,
—Happy, for it was white—and drawing nigh,
Touched the black heart—and lo! it broke in two,
Yet ere it broke, as white as snow it grew,
And of its fragments, every one did prove
White as the feathers of a turtle-dove.

There was a heart—poor heart—as black as night,
And naught in all the world could make it white.

THE DRAUGHT OF TEARS.

*To the sound of thy voice the rivers gladly flow.
The fruit on my trees, my plum-trees, still is green,
The sun ev'ry morning looketh down and saith :
 " What, not yet ripe ? "*

FOR he doth thirst no more,
Therefore for others' thirst he has no pity.
He lets the rain lie heavy on his cloak,
And blesses not the rain,
Sees the brooks flow, and blesses not the brooks ;
He gazes on the well's cool deeps,
Nor blesses its cool deeps,
For this is he, who drank of his own tears ;
His thirst is quenched for ever.
He let them trickle down into his glass,
Let the sun glitter on them, and the moon
 Mirror herself therein.
And sun and moon both said : " What crystal water ! "
Then did he put his lips to it and drink.
And his lips spake : " What fiery, burning water ! "
This is the man, who drank of his own tears.

*To the sound of thy voice the rivers gladly flow.
The fruit on my trees, my plum-trees, still is green,
The sun ev'ry morning looketh down and saith :
 " What, not yet ripe ? "*

MOURN NOT.

*On the bench beside my door
Two men did sit them down.
Weary they seemed, and whispered there together,
Then went their way ;
And who they were, I could not ever learn.*

He whom I love is dead,
And yet I mourn him not,
Because he told me that I must not weep.

- The maize grows high, and low are all the rivers ;
The maids go wading through them, and the water
Just wets their aprons, and their girdles too.

For him I weep not,
For dearer was his grave to him than I ;
And I will not be jealous of his grave,
Or envy it for my beloved's sleep.
Ah no ! but to the grave I say :
"Keep him, for he is thine !"
Only the grave hath taken, too, my smile,
My gaily ringing voice, and lightsome step.
"Give me back these," I say unto the grave ;

The grave replies : " Not so, for else were he
Left all so lonely here ! "

Then to my love I say : " Awake, awake,
And bring me back again my lightsome step,
My voice that rang so gaily, and my smile."

But yet he hearkens not.

So now I must go down into the grave,
To get them back from him.

Only I know, when I am in the grave,
And see my heart's beloved,

There shall I stay for ever, with my smile,
My gaily ringing voice, and lightsome step.

On the bench beside my door

Two men did sit them down.

Weary they seemed, and whispered there together,

Then went their way;

And who they were, I could not ever learn.

THE LUTEPLAYER'S SONG.

THE flame will catch thy floating veil,
If thou dancest round the fire,
Beware, then, for I love thy veil
Full well, my heart's desire ;

More than the moonlight, or my lute's
Sweet plaintive melody,
More than the heart that was mine own
Until I gave it thee.

So many songs I sang thee, love,
From the whole wide world's store ;
Did none find favour with thy heart,
Wouldst thou hear none once more ?

How on the Heiduck's stern, black brow,
One gleaming star there shone,
Because his sweetheart, sorrowing, laid
Her parting kiss thereon ?

Hast thou forgotten, too, the song
Of the maiden proud and fair,
Whose spindle was of hazel wood,
Slender, and light as air ?

Or of the phantom, who each night
His tombstone bore away,
That on his grave flowers might, instead,
Have time to bloom, ere day ?

Dost thou remember none of them,
The songs I sang of yore ?
Did none find favour with thee, love,
Wouldst thou hear none once more ?

For I am the Cobzar, my hand
Is light—my heart, I ween,
Is brimming over more with song
Than all the forest green ;

For it knows winter storms—not I,
I'm warm as is a nest,
So that I warm the very snow,
It melts upon my breast.

Men's pain and anguish do but lend
My living songs more fire,
Their weeping is as wine to me,
To stir me and inspire.

For I am the Cobzar. No rock,
No stream can bar my way,
Nor waterfall nor tangled wood ;
I'm light of foot and gay.

The Luteplayer's Song.

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The sky itself must envy me,
For we are of one mind ;
And if thou be not weary, hark
To me, as to the wind.

And love me, love me, little one,
That I of bliss may sing ;
Then leave me, that with tears and woe
My mournful song may ring ;

And die ! My song must know death too,
And what its sorrows are,
That it may learn despair's true ring ;
Die then ! I am Cobzar !

FAITHLESS.

*A woman came into my field at even,
And asked of me : " How fares it with thy crops ? "
I said : " Right well—the crops stand thick and high."*

YET did she always tell me that she loved me—
Only, she loved that other better far ;
So one dark night they fled away together.
Her face the moon hid, not to see them going,
Nor have to tell me, how she gladly went.
I heard no echo of their horses' hoofs,
Yet now I hear them ever in mine ears.
At night I waken with a start, and say :
" Those be their horses' hoofs ! "
I never saw them kiss—yet always see it.
And now at night I waken with a start,
And say : " I see their kisses ! "
I would not, she should weep as I am weeping,
For she would lack the strength of soul to hold
The bitter curses back.
And I am ever on the eve of cursing,
Yet have I never cursed her to this day.
If I could bless her, I were glad ; yea, gladly
Would pray for her, and give her all my prayers

Instead of this my pain.
Yet still my fancy sees her happy cottage,
And peaceful sleep, that knows no grievous dread.
Then I upbraid myself, for having sorrow
So long as she can smile,
For being one, who, if perchance remembered,
Could make her laughter cease.—
I ask all other women: "Where, where is she?"
And Fate: "What hast thou done, to take her from me?"
I fain would have his blood, whom so she loves;
Yet would not see him, no, not e'en to kill him!
If but my knife alone could find the way,
Then would I tell it: "Go—I wait thy coming!"
Yet would that blood strike horror to my soul—
And that man's death could never comfort me.
And neither will I die, for in the grave
I should no longer see the sun she sees,
Nor the same stars, nor the same wide, blue heaven;
Nor suffer still upon the self-same earth
Where she has happiness.
And I am glad the same sun should look down
Upon my sorrow and her joy, for so
I seem to share some one thing with her still.

That other now doth hear her spindle's whirr!—
Yet is it not my will that he should die,
Since I could never kill him—and his death
Naught could avail me now.

What shall I do to hold from cursing her?—
Nay, rather, school myself to say to her :
“Now ease thy heart, I have forgiven thee ;
Thy hearth be peaceful, fruitful be thy womb,
And ever green the threshold of thy door ;
Nor let thy laughter cease, remembering me.”

*A woman came into my field at even,
And asked of me : “How fares it with thy crops?”
I said: “Right well—the crops stand thick and high.”*

HAY.

YESTERDAY's flowers am I,
And I have drunk my last sweet draught of dew.
Young maidens came and sang me to my death ;
The moon looks down and sees me in my shroud,
 The shroud of my last dew.

Yesterday's flowers, that are yet in me,
Must needs make way for all to-morrow's flowers.
The maidens, too, that sang me to my death
Must even so make way for all the maids
 That are to come.

And as my soul, so too their soul will be
Laden with fragrance of the days gone by.
The maidens that to-morrow come this way
Will not remember that I once did bloom,
For they will only see the new-born flowers.
Yet will my perfume-laden soul bring back,
As a sweet memory, to women's hearts
 Their days of maidenhood.
And then they will be sorry that they came
 To sing me to my death.
And all the butterflies will mourn for me ;
 I bear away with me
The sunshine's dear remembrance, and the low

Soft murmurs of the spring.
My breath is sweet as children's prattle is ;
I drank in all the whole earth's fruitfulness,
To make of it the fragrance of my soul
That shall outlive my death.
Now to the morrow's flowers will I say :
" Dear children of my roots !
I charge you, love the sun as I have loved,
And love the lovers, and the little birds,
That when ye bloom anew,
They never may remember I am dead,
But always think they see the self-same flowers ;
Even as the sun that ever thinks he sees
The self-same birds and lovers upon earth,
Because he is immortal, and for this
Never remembers Death."

Yesterday's flowers am I,
And I have drunk my last sweet draught of dew.
Young maidens came and sang me to my death ;
The moon looks down and sees me in my shroud,
The shroud of my last dew.

IN THE MOONLIGHT.

To-morrow

*The days of gladness will be done for me ;
Heavy and overcast my soul will be,
And day will seem like night for me to-morrow.*

His spade he cast aside,
And told us all the story of his grief.
And thus he spake to us : " I had a daughter,
Gay silver spangles she was wont to wear.
" Father," she said,
" Which is the way that leadeth to the plain ?
I love the plain, when the moon looks thereon,
And I would have the moon look, too, on me."
I followed her, one evening,
My child I followed down into the plain,
And then I saw how the moon looked on her,
While she held converse with a dead man there.
She gently stroked his head, and gave him drink,
And showed him all the loveliness of earth.
Between them stood the cross from off his grave.
I heard the dead man ask her :
" What dost thou all day along upon the earth ?"
My child made answer : " I await the night."

Then he went hence, bearing his cross away,
And hence my daughter went, bearing her grief.
Then dead upon the earth I stretched my child,
That so she might be one with him, the dead,—
Yea, then I slew my child.

To-morrow

*The days of gladness will be done for me,
Heavy and overcast my soul will be,
And day will seem like night for me to-morrow.*

THE MURDERER.

*Whoso toucheth maidens' spindles,
His heart grows light, as the first leaf unfolding
Upon a tree that groweth green.
For light a maiden's heart is, when it sees
The first leaf growing green.*

HE hath wandered on the roads so long already,
They are amazed, to see him not yet weary.
So long beneath the sunshine he hath wandered,
The sun doth ask: "Must thou not quench thy thirst?"
The fountain asks him: "Art thou not yet thirsty?"
The spring doth murmur: "Wilt thou drink, O man?"
So many nights he hath not slept, Night asks him:
"Can I not lull thee for a while to sleep?"
He gives them all one answer: "Let me be."
He hates them all, because they pity him.
And horror-struck he shrinks from Pity,
Since Pity horror-struck, would shrink from him,
If she but knew.
He cannot wipe the sweat from off his brow
For fear it should be blood.
No water can he drink from spring or fountain
For fear it should be blood;
And neither will he dream, for fear of blood,

THE DEAD SOLDIER.

*When all the leaves have fallen,
Still on the bough some two or three remain ;
And through the winter these poor leaves remember
That they must have the pain
Of falling when sweet spring is in the sky.*

HE slept beside the furrows, and I came
And watched his sleep.
Hard by the village they had fought,
And so they brought him dead into the village.
That battle was the first they fought, and he,
He was the first who fell.
Beneath the trees they laid him—none had time
To think of digging any grave for him ;
And he was happy, thus to wait a while
Without his grave—and hear the battle's din.

And when they came upon the morrow's morn
To dig his grave,
He sorrowed, that he must go down to it
Not knowing, and all impotent to ask,
Which way the fight had gone.
Into his grave they shut him fast,

The Dead Soldier.

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And told him naught of it ;
And ever since he still doth ask himself
Which way it went—nor can he sleep in peace.

*When all the leaves have fallen,
Still on the bough some two or three remain ;
And through the winter these poor leaves remember
That they must know the pain
Of falling when sweet spring is in the sky.*

WHERE THE SONGS DWELL.

*Now tell me, where dwell all thy songs—beneath thy necklace
fine?*

*Thy necklace, with its four brave rows, or in that heart of
thine?—*

*I answer—Here within my heart dwell all these songs of
mine.*

Two brothers loved her, and for this, for this the maid is
dead.

More white and clean her cottage was, her threshold
narrower

Than others be. She loved the dance, she loved the
strawberry red ;

And yet it was her love that brought the maiden's death
to her.

—They slew her with the self-same knife, and deep the
four hands pressed

That blade into her heart ;—the heart wept all its blood,
and cried :

“Alas ! her Sunday shift, her chain, the pinks upon her
breast,

Her girdle, to the apron's hem, with crimson I have
dyed !”

And then it asked: "Where will ye dig the grave where
she shall lie?

Beneath the hill, where sings the mill, and bright the
sunbeams smile?

Or by the road, that wanderers may see, in passing by,
Her grave, and as an alms for her, may cross themselves
the while?"

*Now tell me, where dwell all thy songs—beneath thy necklace
fine?*

*Thy necklace, with its four brave rows, or in that heart of
thine?—*

*I answer—Here dwell all the songs, within this heart of
mine.*

HE THAT BETRAYETH NOT.

*I saw thy face was changed,
Yet age went not over thee.
The hazel still is green, yet the corn will be yellow soon.*

I GAVE my heart to him that betrayeth not.
He said : " Come back in a hundred years again,
And thou shalt find it safe beneath my mantle still."
Yet in a hundred years we both shall be but dust ;
How can I ask him then to give me back my heart ?
He that betrayeth not, he lovèd me ;
And happier am I than the first spring days.
But he is never happy, for he hath seen the world,
And knows that life is like a nest in the winter,
The heart of man is always cold therein.
Therefore he took my heart to keep for a hundred years,
 Even in the dust.
Nor will he suffer Death to touch it, nor the earth
 To quicken it.
But he will say to Death and Earth : " This is her heart,
That I in a hundred years have promised to give her
 back."
Then Death and Earth will wonder at him that betrayeth
 not.

He that Betrayeth Not.

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And my heart will sleep, there in the dust of thy hand,
There, in thy hand of dust.

*I saw thy face was changed,
Yet age went not over thee.
The hazel still is green, yet the corn will be yellow soon.*

THE OTHER ONE.

*The river, last night, swept the bridge away,
And so we must wade through the river to-day.
The maidens sing as they wade, and are gay.*

A LITTLE sister the dead child had,
Since it died, little sister has grown more glad,
And saith to her mother: "Its own sweet smile
The one that is dead unto me did give;
And all the life, that it might not live,
Now lives in me." But the mother, the while,
Fell a-weeping, and bowed her head,
And remembered the child that was dead.

*The river, last night, swept the bridge away,
And so we must wade through the river to-day.
The maidens sing as they wade, and are gay.*

THE OUTCAST.

Go not over the little bridge,

It is too old.

The trees that have been felled lie on the earth,

And the birds that still would perch upon their boughs

Must fly very close to earth.

WHY do they ask me : "Is it thou?"

Nay, nay, I know of nothing ;

No one has told me aught, yet all are afraid of me,

The stones upon the road shrink from my footsteps,

But I am wearier far than if I had trodden them.

I am always left alone, and yet I hear voices always ;

My sleep is never disturbed, and yet I feel

As though I had never slept.

Know ye why I am weary, so very weary,

That if the grave should say to me : "Lie down

Here in my lap and rest," I would bless the grave ?

It is this—I carry one upon my shoulders,

I carry him onward ever, and feel his hands

About my throat—his breath upon my neck.

It is he that makes my step so heavy,

And drives me wild, too, with the sound of his voice,

It is he that drinks my sleep.

And when I ask him : "Whither shall I take thee,
That I may have to carry thee no more?"
He points to the horizon.
He is as heavy as a widow's heart.
I know, too, all his thoughts, and his thoughts burn me,
Because he thinks upon my sorrow.
And when we pass some hut, I say :
"Let us linger here awhile, this hut seemeth pleasant to
me,"
But he answers : "Never a hut may open its doors to
thee."
And when I ask him : "Friend, art thou not yet weary?"
He answers : "I? I rest in thy weariness,
Refresh myself in thy sweat."
Even on my own hearth
I can never set him down over against me,
He clings to my shoulder always—
I know not even his face.
Then I say to him : "Thou unknown one!"
And he answers me : "Thou accurst!"

Go not over the little bridge,

It is too old.

The trees that have been felled lie on the earth,

And the birds that still would perch upon their boughs

Must fly very close to earth.

BARREN.

*Flow through the plains, river, flow onward afar ;
My soul is broken within me, the days flee by.
When the sun in his might appeareth, the birds sing aloud,
With flowers the maidens gleefully deck their hair.
I know my cottage, because 'tis the smallest of all,
And the storks already have built them two nests thereon.*

I AM she, that hath borne no children ;
Yet there is no one hath cursed me, I look the same as the
others.

But the nests pity me even ;
The sun, the mother of stars, hath compassion upon me,
and saith :

“ O childless woman ! what dost thou with all the days I
make bright ? ”

Mine ear is full of the murmur of rocking cradles.

“ For a single cradle,” saith Nature, “ I would give every
one of my graves.”

Joy shrinketh and turneth from me, like the setting sun
from the earth.

Fruitful women draw nigh me, and tenderly clasp my
hand ;

But alone am I and powerless, when the anguish sweeps
over me.

My threshold makes question and asks me: "Speak, oh,
when will he come?"

And I have no words to answer.

I feel a horror come o'er me of all the days and the nights.
Yet beneath my heart there singeth, unceasing, a voice
in me,

And I ask: "Is it his, perchance?"

But nay, for I know it is only the voice of my yearning
desire.

And then I speak to the rivers: "Would ye make the
plains fruitful indeed?"

I am filled with hate for the earth, that is fruitful and
faileth not.

Only the graves I love, for in them naught quickens more,
Future for them there is none, even as for me.

Oh, what a flood of laughter he would bring to this
threshold of mine!

And oh, how sweetly slumber beneath the sun of my
smile!

Oh, and how were I blessèd, if I could but look in his
eyes,

Drowning my gaze in his, and therein wholly forgetting
That other joys were on earth!

Then would the nests and the huts call me their sister, if
only

His mother were I!

For I hear his voice that singeth, unceasing, beneath my
heart,

For I know that he lives in me, only he cannot be born,
And I may possess of him nothing except my yearning
desire !

Mine ear is full of the murmur of rocking cradles.

Flow through the plains, river, flow onward afar.

My soul is broken within me, the days flee by.

When the sun in his might appeareth, the birds sing aloud,

With flowers the maidens gleefully deck their hair.

I know my cottage, because 'tis the smallest of all,

And the storks already have built them two nests thereon.

HE THAT TOOK NOTHING.

*See how it raineth ! and the corn is cut upon the plain,
And I have left my sickle, too, forgotten 'mid the grain ;
Now there it lies—ah, woe is me ! beneath the falling rain.*

OF all the lads that joined the dance, each took some
sign from me—

One took my girdle, and thou know'st full well which
that may be,

The one, my sister of the cross, I fashionèd with thee.

My chain, sweet sister of the cross, another took ; what
needs

To tell thee which—the one that hath two strings of
golden beads.

Another took my flower from me—and which one, dost
thou know ?

It is, my sister of the cross, the floweret that doth blow
In autumn days among the grass where thick the plum-
trees grow.

But only one took naught away—and know'st thou, sister,
who ?

He, of whom oft I spake to thee, when I most silent grew.
He, little sister of the cross, it is I love so true.

Then quick run after him, he dwells beside the mill-pool
deep,
And through his slumbers murmuring on, their watch the
waters keep.
O happy water, that may sing and lull him in his sleep !

Then quickly run thou after him, my sister, do not stay
To watch the flocks upon the hill, that browse the live-
long day ;
Bring him a girdle and a chain, yea, and a flower—and
say :

“I found them hard beside the mill, and all of them are
thine.”
But stay not longer, lest thou too shouldst love him, sister
mine ;

That we may both not have to weep together, oh beware !
My tears could not love thy tears, nor yet my care thy
care ;
They could not dwell within my hut, nor would be
welcome there.

*See how it raineth ! and the corn is cut upon the plain,
And I have left my sickle, too, forgotten 'mid the grain ;
Now there it lies—ah, woe is me ! beneath the falling rain.*

DIRGE.

ON THE DEATH OF A YOUNG MAN.

How thou art sleeping, sleeping !

Thy horse, without, hath neighed ;

The plains around have heard it,

And wondering stand the plains ;

“ Why dost thou neigh at morning

So early, gentle horse ? ”

The maize hath bowed its head ;

The plain, its mother, felt it,

Then was the plain afraid ;

“ Why dost thou bend above me,

Now that no wind is blowing,

Thou maize, proud child of mine ? ”

Oh wander, wander—never turn about—

On through the wood, where little birds are singing,

Down to the village wander,

On through the courtyard, where the oxen lie—

Oh wander, wander, neither turn thee back,

Oh wander, wander, never turn about,

But seek the house and tread the threshold's stone,

Then pass into the chamber ;

What there thou seest, tell aloud to none
Yea, do as though thou, seeing, didst not see ;
For thou wilt wish thou wert the threshold-stone,
And hadst no need to look on such a sight.

How thou art sleeping now !
Heaven envied mother Earth because of thee ;
Then would not Earth that Heaven should envy her,
Because Heaven gave her
The sunshine's joy,
The stars' mild light,
The blessings of the blossom-bringing rain.
So in requital, Earth gave thee to Heaven.
Then go thou up to Heaven,
Sent from the Earth ;
For all the Earth hath naught so fair as thou.
Go, laden with the whole world's lamentations,
Go hence with all its tears.
Yea, I have washed thee with my tears,
And shrouded thee in sighs,
Then go, that Heaven may be content—but let it
Ask for no more, since it hath taken thee.
How thou art sleeping, sleeping !
Dark days may threaten this thy land to-morrow—
But thou hast left the road ;
Thy bride be fain to veil her head ¹ to-morrow—
But thou hast left the road.

¹ Note 5.

For thee, to-morrow
Is as an overthrown and empty nest.
How thou art sleeping, sleeping!
Where is thy breath?
And yet the wind still breathes!
Where is thine eyes' dear light?
And yet our eyes are open!
Now hast thou cast thy spade upon the ground,
And lain thee down to die!

Thy horse, without, hath neighed;
The plains around have heard it,
And wondering stand the plains;
"Why dost thou neigh at morning
So early, gentle horse?"
The maize hath bowed itself;
The plain, its mother, felt it,
Then was the plain afraid;
"Why dost thou bend above me,
Now that no wind is blowing,
Thou maize, proud child of mine?"

DIRGE.

ON THE DEATH OF A MAIDEN.

*Down from the hill I went
On to the plain, and on the plain I saw
The budding meadows—and a tender maiden
Who fiercely strove with Death.*

DEAD ! she is dead !
The glory of the day is gone,
The threshold's light is quenched !
Who will go forth now in the morning early,
To wake again the old well's echoes deep,
And whose gay singing will reply at even,
Now, to the plaintive voices of the sheep ?
Who will now send the sound of laughter ringing
Adown our pathways steep ?

Who now will set the merry spindle dancing,
And deftly catch it, when it slips away ?
The very sun shone but for her alone—
God ! Thou hadst better have let die the sun !
For her the maize shook out its golden hair—
Oh ! hadst Thou rather taken from the maize,
Its golden hair, my God !
The stars at night all fell from out the sky,

Only that they might reach her !
And now the earth will take and hide her from us
Whenever she did pass the fresh-turned furrows,
The earth would say to her :
“ Fair maid, how gladly would I make thee mine,
“ To cradle thee and rock thee in my lap,
There, where all roots do quicken.
For see, I give the plain so many flowers,
Flowers that glitter in the light of day ;
Now would I have this one, this only flower,
All to myself.
Her would I gently cover,
Nourish myself with her.”
So the earth took her ;
And clasps her now so closely in its arms.
But yet the maiden to the earth made answer :
“ Good, fresh earth, take me not !
I would not thou shouldst clasp me in thine arms
Will not the quickening of the seeds suffice thee,
And the light step of lovers ?
O good, fresh earth,
Let me not ever come to sleep beneath thee !
For I would veil my head, and be a wife,
A woman, strong for toil ;
And I will bear thee fair and noble children
To till thy ground.
Good, fresh earth, take me not ! ”
But the earth took her.

And the earth holds her fast within its arms,
And gives her back no more.
Down from the hill she went and o'er the meadows,
Wandering through deep night, and strove with Death,
Even as tangled spindles strive together.

Dead ! she is dead !
The glory of the day is gone,
The threshold's light is quenched.
Who will go forth, now, in the morning early,
To wake again the old well's echoes deep ?
And whose gay singing will reply at even,
Now, to the plaintive voices of the sheep ?
Who will now send the sound of laughter ringing
Adown our pathways steep ?

DIRGE.

ON THE DEATH OF A CHILD.

THE river went weeping, weeping !
Ah me ! how it did weep !
But I would never heed it,
The weeping of the river,
Whilst thou wert at my breast.
The stars—poor stars—were weeping,
But I would not hear their weeping
Whilst yet I heard thy voice.

Unhappy men drew nigh me and told me of their woe,
They said : " We are the sorrow of all humanity."
But I had no compassion for human misery,
Whilst thou wert with me still.

Then these—the river with its weeping,
The piteous stars, the miserable men,
All prayed the earth's dark depths to take thee from me,
That so my woe might understand their woe ;
And now—I weep.
Yet weep I not for human misery,
Nor for the stars' complaining,
Nor for the river's wailing,
I weep for thee alone, most miserly,

Keep all my tears for thee !
Now I must rock for ever empty arms,
That grieve they have no burden any more.
Now I must sing, and know the while, no ears
Are there to hearken.
The birds will ask me : " To whom singest thou ? "
The moon look down and ask : " Whom rockest thou ? "
The grave will be right proud, while I am cursed,
That I did give her thee.
My womb upbraideth me, because I gave
To Death the gift that once she gave to me,
The gift that sprung from her.
Now I must see thy sleep, and never know
Whether this sleep be sweet.
Then do I ask of Earth :
" Is the sleep sweet indeed,
That in thy lap we sleep ? "
But ah ! thou knowest, Earth misliketh pity,
And loves to hold her peace !
Wilt thou, then, answer in her stead, and say :
" What do the birds, O mother,
Since I have gone to sleep ?
And the river with its pebbles,
Since I have gone to sleep ?
And thy broken heart, O mother,
Thy little heart, dear mother,
Since I have gone to sleep ?
Does my father guide the oxen,

Walking beside the ploughshare,
Since I have gone to sleep?"
Oh, say all this to me!
Answer instead of Earth, that knows no pity,
And loves to hold her peace.

The river went weeping, weeping!
Ah me! how it did weep!
But I would never heed it,
The weeping of the river,
Whilst thou wert at my breast.
The stars, poor stars, were weeping,
But I would not hear their weeping,
Whilst yet I heard thy voice.

SPINNING SONGS.

SPINNING SONGS. X

I.

WHAT didst thou, mother, when thou wert a maiden?—

I was young.—

Didst thou, like me, hark to the moon's soft footfalls

Across the sky?

Or didst thou watch the little stars' betrothal?—

Thy father cometh home, leave the door open.—

Down to the fountain didst thou go, and there,

Thy wooden pitcher filled, didst thou yet linger

Another hour, with the full pitcher by thee?—

I was young.—

And did thy tears make glad thy countenance?

And did thy sleep bring gladness to the night?

And did thy dreams bring gladness to thy sleep?

And didst thou smile, even by graves, despite

Thy pity for the dead?—

Thy father cometh home, leave the door open.—

Lovedst thou strawberries and raspberries,
Because they are as red as maidens' lips?
Didst love thy girdle for its many pearls,
The river and the wood, because they lie
 So close behind the village?
Didst love the beating of thy heart,
There close beneath thy bodice,
Even although 'twere not thy Sunday bodice?—
—Thy father cometh home, leave the door open.

II.

WHAT dost thou seek in the wood by night?—

I seek my youth, and I do not know
What path she took, for with footsteps light
She fled, and fast. I can see her go,
Yet never can reach her; and now again
I catch a glimpse through the forest trees
Of her white dress fluttering in the breeze;
I can hear the chink of her dancing chain,
And the ring of her laughter—and see her stay
By the brook to drink; and then I say:
“Dear Youth! let me thy distaff touch,
And from thy pitcher drink with thee;
These berries take—thou lovest such!
And on the grass come dance with me.”

What dost thou seek in the wood by night?—

I seek my love—yea, him that passed
On his young brown horse, so light and fast;
Rode through the twilight, and waited not
For the moon to give him her gentle light,
And waited not for the sun to rise,
Nor even until he had forgot

My kiss, that on his lips yet lies.
The sound of his voice in the wind I heard,
And it spoke to the wind and the woodland bird,
 But to me, not a single word.
I said: "Dear love, thy haste despite,
Say but one word to me, and I
Whate'er thou askest will reply!"

What dost thou seek in the wood by night?

III.

WHAT hath he done, the luckless fellow,
That thou wilt speak to him no more;
Are ye not of the self-same village?

Why wilt thou, sister, not sit down by me?
And what awaitest thou, to stand so long?
Look down the way no longer,
Watch the old well no longer,
But rather hark to me, the while I sing.

What hath he done—the luckless fellow,
That thou wilt speak to him no more?
Are ye not of the self-same village?—

—Down to the river-side we went together.
He said: “Now hearken, hearken to the wind
That rustles through the leaves.”
I said: “Oh see, oh see the merry sunshine
That shineth through the wavelet.”

He said: “I love, I swear I love, a woman
Thou knowest not.”

I said: “I love, I swear I love, a lad
Of whom thou knowest naught.”

He said: “That woman ceaseless weeps for me.”

And I replied : " That lad awaiteth me."
Then from the river we went hence together.
And I, I knew full well he was my lad ;
And he, he surely knew I was that woman.

But yet—
Because of all that sunshine in the water,
And of the wind that rustled through the leaves,
We both were silent—we kept silence both.—

What hath he done, the luckless fellow,
That thou wilt speak to him no more,
Are ye not of the self-same village ?

IV.

*Lie down upon the earth,
Then thou canst hear the sound of the seeds quickening.*

NEIGHBOUR, what doth thy husband when he cometh
home from work?—

—He thinks of her he loved before he knew me.
She wore about her throat a necklace of red beads,
Her teeth were white, as white as a string of mock pearls,
And he loved her.

She went away with another,
And then he took me to wife,
Because I was strong to work.

*Lie down upon the earth,
Then thou canst hear the sound of the seeds quickening.*

But his heart is with that other ;
It went the way she went.
Then I talk to him of her, that his heart may stay with
me ;

I ask what her face was like,
Although I know full well—he has told me a hundred
times ;

I listen to him, and so the hours pass by.
And when I have pleased him, he says :

“Thou art like her.”

But when I cross him, he says :

“Another woman art thou than she.”

But I, I am strong to work, thou knowest it, neighbour.

Lie down upon the earth,

Then thou canst hear the sound of the seeds quickening.

As soon as I have a daughter, I will tell her :

“A necklace of red beads put around thy throat,

That men may love thee.”

And if I have a boy, I will say to him :

“Follow the woman whose teeth are like a string of mock
pearls.”

For my husband always speaks of her ;

I feel as though I had known her,

As though she had been an elder sister of mine,

Who was dead.

And my husband always speaks to me of her.

Lie down upon the earth,

Then thou canst hear the sound of the seeds quickening.

V.

*Look on the plain, look not upon my face,
The while I speak to thee.*

ON winter evenings, when it snows, it snows.
My little sister asks me, wherefore now
The earth has such white hair,
Such cold, long hair, that wholly covers it?
I tell my sister: Earth has grown so old,
Puts no more flowers in her snow-white hair.
Nor may the lovers dare
To love each other any more, or speak
Of their bright youth, seeing the Earth so old.
The sun smiles down on Earth no more—he says:
“I loved thee whilst thou yet wert green, but now
What hast thou done with that thy spring?”
And Earth replies: “I gave it to the harvest,
But now the harvest’s reaped,
I gave it to the maiden; now the maiden
Hath veiled her head.”

*Look on the plain, look not upon my face,
The while I speak to thee.*

But spring will come again, and Earth remember
Her snow-white hair no more;

And to the harvest she will give her spring
Again, that it may ripen.
And she will give thee somewhat too, my sister.

*Look on the plain, look not upon my face,
The while I speak to thee.*

Yes, she will give thee ev'ry night new dreams,
And fragrant basil she will give thee, too,
And crystal water from the thawing rivers.

*Look on the plain, look not upon my face,
The while I speak to thee.*

But me—what will she give me, by the time
Her snow-white hair is gone?
Only a little place far down beneath her,
That will she give to me—just long enough
To hold my little body;
And she will give me, too, sleep for my heart,
And on my heart
Three flowers, and on ev'ry flower three tears.
One will be thine, I think, my little sister,
And one my mother's tear, and one my father's;
Only the tear of him, my heart's beloved,
Will not be there.
And all the flowers will fade, despite those tears,
When Earth shall have her snow-white hair again.

*Look on the plain, look not upon my face,
The while I speak to thee.*

AUTUMN.

A DRAMA.

TIME AND AUTHOR UNKNOWN.

AUTUMN.

The tree. MY leaves have fallen, but it is not winter.
I have not yet felt any storm rush by.

The river. I will flow onward fast, to hear no more,
Yet have I been constrained to hear it all.

The wife. Come out and stand upon your thresholds,
 neighbours,
That from my threshold I may see you all.
Tell me, what do the nests without the birds ?
My little child is lying in the grass,
His face is covered with the blades of grass.
While I did bear the child, I ever watched
The reaper work, that it might love the harvests ;
And when the boy was born, the meadow said :
“ This is my child. And when he is grown up
Into a fine and stalwart lad, his bride
He will choose out, forgetting all my love,
Yea, even as the brook forgets the mountain
When it flows down amid the flowery meads.”

The husband. Wife, hast thou washed the dagger ev’ry
 morning,
At dawn, and ev’ry evening too, at nightfall ?

The wife. O husband ! wherefore dost thou love the
knife ?

The husband. Throw wood upon the fire, and I will
tell thee.

The wife. Hush thee awhile, until the fire doth burn.

The fire. I rise from out the embers, like the seed
From out Earth's womb. I see the wife so pale,
So full of thought the husband. Round the chamber
I send my glance, and see the chamber empty.
Then will I sing my merry song to them :
I rise from out the embers, like the seed
Out from the womb of Earth. I quaff the sap,
Till I am drunk therewith, and so I die.

The wife. Oh tell me ! wherefore dost thou love the
knife ?

The husband. My father loved it, for it waits for
blood.

Since first it had its being, it doth wait,
And says each morning : "Will it be to-day ?"
And ev'ry night : "Will it be done to-night ?"
It is to drink my blood ; for this I wash it.
My father spake : "The knife has yet drunk naught,
Because it thirsts to drink our blood."

The wife. I fear
That dagger, like my shadow on the ground,
Yea, like the hour of death !

The husband. What doth the child ?

The wife. It sleepeth in the grass—the blades of grass
Cover its little face.

The husband. What doth the child ?

The wife. It journeys on along the way of life,
Even as a cart adown the highway moves.

The husband. What doth the child ?

The wife. It hath within its veins
Thy blood, and in its blood our love's sweet warmth.

The husband. Wife, wife ! dost thou remember still
our love ?

The wife. I had spun off three distaffs, and had filled
The pitchers full with water, and already
Had prayed for all the dead—and cast my veil
Upon the hearth, because I was alone.
When from the field thou camest home that evening,
Didst bring me on thy spade the fresh earth's fragrance.
Thy hair was damp with sweat.

The husband. And then I went ;
I went away, and thou wert left alone.

The wife. I was alone, and sat and watched the ravens,
And watched the snow.

The husband. Thou wert alone.

The wife. O husband !
Why tarry on the threshold thus ?

The husband. I listen.

The wife. Oh listen not by night, for then one hears
The dead men talk, who upon earth had sorrow ;
They speak to us of sorrow too.

The husband. I listen.

The river. Art thou not he that went away, and now
We know thee scarce again.

The forest. Yea, thou art he
That went away—and we have all forgot thee.

The river. The winter came, and I was frozen over.

The forest. The winter came, and made me desolate.

The river. What didst thou find beside thy hearth ?

The husband. The child.

The forest. What didst thou find within thy house ?

The husband. The child.

The river. She felt it quick'ning in her womb, and
laughed.

The forest. It leaped within her womb, and she was glad.

The river. Dost thou remember yet thy love, O man ?

The husband. Home from my work I came. My
spade still kept
Earth's fragrance, and my hair was damp with sweat.
My cloak I had left lying on the hearth.

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[illegible]

The river. Still at the reaper did she look, and he
Looked back at her—and starless was the night.

The earth on fire—the earth is all a-blaze ;
And I, too, burn with her. The night has sunk
From heaven, and now everywhere 'tis night,
Yea, I am plunged in night. Upon his sickle
He, too, bore Earth's rich fragrance, and his hair
Was beaded, too, with sweat.

Come, neighbour, come,
See how the sun has fallen down to Earth !

The neighbour. Why, neighbour, say, art thou not yet asleep?

The husband. Sleep I have driven from me like a thief,
And told him never to return again.

The neighbour. Sleep is man's brother !

The husband. Yet I drove him hence.

The neighbour. What wilt thou then of me ?

The husband. Come hither—tell me
Who is my mother ? For I have forgotten.

The neighbour. But she remembers—for she cried
aloud
When thou didst strive for life.

The husband. If she remember,
Go, tell her to forget—then could I kill her
Because she gave me life—and she could never
Say, that her son had killed her.

The neighbour. But her blood
Creeps wearily already through her veins.

The husband. Speak not of blood !

The neighbour. She, too, hath banished sleep,
Even as a wife doth drive a lover hence ;
And she hath said : “ I am too old for thee.”

The husband. She will be sorry that she doth not sleep,
When she beholdeth me.

The husband. Hast thou heard naught ?

The mother. Yea, verily, I heard the old well creaking.

The husband. Hast thou heard naught ?

The mother. Yea, verily, I heard
The screech-owl crying from the ash-tree there.

The husband. Naught, naught hast heard ?

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Yea, verily, I heard

The husband. Ha ! but didst not hear

Blood !

The husband. What floweth from a piercèd bosom ?

Blood !

The husband. What shall I pour upon the silken veil,

Blood !

The husband. A tree hath fallen in the wood, and now

My son,

Why did I ever go ?

The mother. Better hadst thou gone down into the

The husband. Sleep have I driven from me like a thief.

The mother. But thou hast yet killed naught, my son



The husband. Wife, hast thou washed the dagger, art
thou sure
It is washed clean ?

The wife. Yea, with the river's water,
The river's very self, I washed it clean.
The river spake : " And wilt thou give it me
When it hath tasted its first draught ? "

The husband. Thou shalt !

The wife. But I did tell the river : " Thou must wait
For many harvests still, before thou get it."

The husband. Oh, prate no more of harvests now !

The wife. I dreamed
That from the fields thou camest home to me,
And that thy spade still bore the scent of earth,
And that thy hair was damp with sweat.

The husband. I dreamed
That both thy tresses lay upon thy shoulder,
And that I took thee in mine arms.

The wife. What now !
Didst dream so fair a dream ?

The husband. Thine, too, was fair !

The river. What doth the sunshine in the sky ? It
looks
Upon thy shame.

The tree. Earth whispers round my roots,
" His father's sleep is restless, since he knows."

The fire. I die, yet gladly do I die, that so
I may behold thine image never more.

The knife. For very joy I quiver, and but fear
That now his hand may tremble. If I knew
The way to kill, I'd do it all alone !

The wife. Here is the child.

The husband. Wife, dost thou love the child ?

The wife. As the dead man his grave, that ne'er he
leaves.

The husband. What didst thou look upon, while thou
didst bear it ?

The wife. I looked upon the reaper, that my child
Might love the harvests.

The husband. Kiss the dagger, wife,
As though it were the heart of thine own child.

The wife. What hath it done, that I should kiss it so ?

The husband. It is about to do.

The wife. O knife, I kiss thee,
Yea, with my lips, and let this kiss of mine
Make up to thee for blood, that thou forget
To crave for it.

The husband. Let me now kiss the child,
There on his little heart. Show me the spot.

The wife. I've drawn the shirt away.

The husband. I plunge my knife

Deep down within.—Did he, too, on his spade
Bear the earth's fragrance in? And was his hair
Damp, too, with sweat?

The knife. The blood that I have drunk
Was thine own blood.

The husband. Dost thou say nothing, wife?
Dost make no lamentation? As for me,
He was no child of mine. I cannot mourn him.

The wife. I fain would lay my very entrails bare
To show thee all their anguish. I would fain
Tear from my breast this heart, all reeking hot,
To cast it in thy face. Yet I forbear,
For I must keep my heart, yea, and mine entrails,
To mourn for him.

Deep in the grass wert sleeping,
Thy face was covered with the blades of grass;
Deep in earth's bosom thou must slumber now,
Thy little face be covered by the earth;
Now it will fade, that little face of thine,
And I may never look upon it more.
Mine anguish thou wilt be, that wert my joy.
Now I must say to Earth: "Hast taken him,
Taken him from me," I, who once was wont
To say to Heaven, "Thou hast given him me."
I will not lay one flower on his grave,
That so more room be left there for my tears.
Thou art mine anguish, that wert once my joy.

The forest. Yea, he was like my tender leaves in April.

The river. I knew him—he was always merry.

The husband.

River,

Now take the knife !

The river. Thine is the blood ! yea, thine !

For the blood spake to me : “ I come of him,

The white-haired father, and I am the blood

Of stalwart working-folk. Now they have spilt me.

Useless am I—with thee I cannot mingle,

Blood cannot turn to water. So for ever

I must flow on, red through the crystal water.

I cried to him, but yet he never heard me.

I said, ‘ I am thy blood,’ but yet he shed me.”

The husband. The sun sank down so straight upon the
earth,

He set the earth on fire, and now the earth

Is all a-blaze—and I, too, burn with it.

The wife. Thou art mine anguish, that wert all my joy.

NOTES.

NOTE 1.

THE Heiduck is the traditional hero of the Roumanian peasantry; he is the patriot who figures in all the old legends as fighting in the first rank for the freedom of his country; he is the bold, brave outlaw, ever warring against restraint, whose exploits are shrouded in fascinating mystery. A dark fate seems to pursue him, yet he is the gayest and most reckless of beings: the handsomest among men, too, the best singer, the most intrepid rider, happiest when the boundless plains or the mountain gorges lie open before him. He is indeed the most bewitching of lovers, but woe to the maiden who feels his charm too deeply, for he is of those who "love and ride away."

NOTE 2.

It is the custom in Roumanian villages to paint a flower on the wall of a house in which a maiden lives; but if she is known to have behaved ill, the village youths come and efface the painting from the wall.

NOTE 3.

The phrase "sister of the cross" has been used by the translators to denote a sort of elective relationship which is common in Roumania, and is distinguished by the untranslatable word "surata" a mere variation of "sora," a sister. It is usual there for two girls who may be no relation to each other, to choose each other out as sisters, and this choice is hallowed by a special service in church, during which their feet are chained together, to symbolize the bond that is henceforth to unite them. This is regarded as so real a one, that marriage with the brother of one's elective sister is forbidden, nor can these two "sisters" marry two brothers.

NOTE 4.

This idea is a kindred one to that explained in note 2; flowers cannot prosper near the house of a fallen maiden.

NOTE 5.

Among the Roumanian peasants, no married woman is ever seen with her head uncovered; on the other hand, girls must always go bare-headed. Hence the expression "be fain to veil her head" means wishing to be a wife.





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